

[Report No. 137.]

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

JANUARY 25, 1859.

Read a first and second time, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. WOOD, from the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, reported the following bill :

A BILL

To establish a national line of mail steamships between certain ports of the United States and Great Britain.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 That a line of mail steamships be, and the same is hereby,
4 established under the control of "The National Steamship
5 Company," for semi-weekly service between the United States
6 and Europe. There shall be two divisions of the service :
7 the first division shall be in alternate trips from the ports of
8 Portland, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, to Liverpool,
9 England ; the second division shall be in alternate trips from
10 Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans,
11 to the port of Southampton, in England. The departures

12 shall be fixed and determined by such schedule as the Post-
13 master General may adopt, to give one departure in each week
14 to and from the ports of the south, and one departure in each
15 week to and from the ports of the north ; and the steamers in
16 their voyages from and to New Orleans shall touch at the
17 ports of Havana, Cuba, Santander, in Spain, and Bordeaux, in
18 France.

1 SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That the Postmaster
2 General is hereby authorized and directed to contract with
3 Ambrose W. Thompson, president of said National Steamship
4 Company, for the aforesaid mail service, which shall be per-
5 formed by not less than six steamers for the first division ; each
6 of said steamers shall not be of less than two thousand tons
7 measurement, well adapted to mail purposes, and which shall
8 only after inspection be accepted for the service by the Post-
9 master General. The service of this first division shall com-
10 mence within ninety days from the date of the acceptance of
11 the ships by the Postmaster General. The service of the
12 second division shall be performed by not less than eight
13 steamers ; the said steamers shall not exceed three thousand
14 tons measurement each, be well adapted to mail purposes, and to
15 the depth of water of the southern ports ; they shall be con-
16 structed in the highest state of improvement, in such manner
17 as to make them available for transport ships, and capable of

18 carrying moderate batteries ; the service of this second division
19 shall commence within twelve months from the date of contract.

1 SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That the Secretary
2 of the Treasury is hereby authorized and directed to advance,
3 under the terms of the contract, the bonds of the United
4 States, bearing five per cent. coupons, payable semi-annually,
5 and the principal payable in twenty years, towards the con-
6 struction and equipment of said eight steamships for the south-
7 ern division, to the amount of two-thirds of the whole cost of
8 the said eight steamships, the said advance to be made from
9 time to time as the construction shall progress, under the in-
10 spection and supervision of such person as may be appointed
11 therefor by the Postmaster General ; this advance to be re-
12 turned to the treasury in annual payments of ten per centum,
13 commencing at the end of the second year of the service of
14 said steamers, and continuing until the whole amount is repaid.

1 SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That the mail pay
2 for the service of the said steamers shall be the gross sum of
3 the land and sea postages on mailable matter carried in the said
4 steamers during the whole term of the contract, provided the
5 said compensation shall not be less during the first three years
6 of the service than the rate of two dollars for each statute
7 mile of distance run by the said steamers ; and should this
8 exceed the sum of the postage receipts, then such excess shall
9 be deducted from the receipts of the last three years of the con-

tract. The postage receipts shall go into the general funds of the Post Office Department, and be paid therefrom monthly to the contractor, and the excess of payment, if any, as afore said, during the first three years of the service, shall be paid from the general appropriations made to the Post Office Department. From this monthly amount the Postmaster General shall deduct in each month the pro rata proportion of the interest maturing upon the bonds advanced towards the construction of said ships, which amount shall be paid into the treasury of the United States for the purpose of meeting the coupons upon the said bonds. And he shall also retain, after the end of the second year's service of said steamers, ten per centum in each year of the amount advanced for construction until the amount of said advance is fully repaid to the treasury of the United States.

1 SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That, for the purpose
2 of securing the government for the amount advanced, a mort-
3 gage lien shall be executed to the government, the steamers
4 shall be insured in good insurance companies, and policies to
5 the amount of said advance shall be deposited with the Secre-
6 tary of the Treasury.

1 SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted*, That the contract for
2 mail service shall be for ten years for each division of said ser-
3 vice. And the Postmaster General is authorized, if in his
4 opinion the interest of his department requires it, to cause the

5 service to be extended, by auxiliary steamers, to Havre, Ant-
6 werp, and Bremen, upon such equitable terms for said exten-
7 sion of service as he may agree with said company ; and fur-
8 ther, to alter and determine the departures of the whole of
9 said service, with consent of the contractor, but in no way to
10 diminish the whole number of departures for semi-weekly
11 service. One spare steamer shall be kept in readiness in
12 Great Britain and one in the United States to supply any
13 accidental or contingent want, to keep the service regular and
14 the days of departure exact ; and when not employed, either
15 or both of the said steamers shall be subject to the orders of
16 the Navy Department, upon reasonable compensation being
17 made therefor. And the government shall have the privilege
18 at any time to purchase or employ any or all the said vessels,
19 upon terms to be decided by arbitrators mutually chosen, if
20 the parties cannot agree ; and when so employed they may be
21 armed and equipped for such purposes as the government may
22 require.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

JANUARY 25, 1859.

Mr. ENGLISH gave notice of his intention, at the proper time, to offer the following amendment in the nature of a substitute.

AMENDMENT.

A bill to provide for the transportation of the United States mails to foreign countries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 That the fourth section of the act entitled “ An act making
4 appropriations for the transportation of the United States mail
5 by ocean steamers, and otherwise,” &c., approved June four-
6 teen, eighteen hundred and fifty-eight, be, and the same is
7 hereby, amended so as to authorize the making of contracts
8 for carrying the mails on the sea, for any period not to exceed
9 ten years, at the discretion of the Postmaster General.

1 SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That the Postmaster
2 General be, and he is hereby, authorized to contract with the
3 lowest responsible bidder or bidders for the transportation of a
4 weekly trans-Atlantic mail by United States steamers, either
5 for the accruing United States postages, sea and inland, on the

6 mails conveyed, or for a specific sum or sums not to exceed in
7 the aggregate the amount of four hundred thousand dollars per
8 annum.

1 SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted,* That the Postmaster
2 General shall, before entering into any contract or contracts
3 under the provisions of this act, be fully satisfied of the ability,
4 pecuniary and otherwise, of the party or parties proposing for
5 the service, and require good and sufficient security for the
6 regular and faithful performance of the same; and shall also
7 insert in said contracts that the steamships employed in con-
8 veying the mails shall be safe and substantial steamers, and
9 suitable in all respects for the proper performance of the
10 service.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

JANUARY 25, 1859.

Mr. HORTON gave notice of his intention, at the proper time, to offer the following amendment in the nature of a substitute.

AMENDMENT

A bill to provide for the transportation of the United States mails to foreign countries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 That the Postmaster General is hereby authorized and required
4 to contract with any proper parties who shall give adequate
5 security for its performance for the conveyance of the mails
6 between New York and Liverpool, and between New York
7 and Havre and Bremen, by the way of Southampton, weekly.
8 Such contract shall be on the terms that the contractors shall
9 receive, as the equivalent for the service, either the sea and
10 inland postages accruing thereon, or the sum of twelve thou-
11 sand five hundred dollars for each round trip, at their election,
12 and the said contract shall be made for a term not exceeding
13 ten years.